(c) what are the export projections for rice for the Ninth Five Year Plan, both basmati and non-basmati, in terms of quantity and value?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The exports of rice including non-basmati rice depend upon the international demand and supply position, prices prevailing in the international and domestic markets, consumer preferences, different varieties traded, variation in quality and other terms of trade.

(b) India's credibility is adversly affected when supplies are undependable.

(c) The export projections for the Ninth Five Year Plan have not been formulated.

Financial assistance to rubber marketing federation

2151. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a request from the Kerala Government for financial assistance of Rs. 100 crores to the Rubber Marketing Federation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's decision thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Dumping of Titanium Dioxide

2152. SHRI J.CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that certain multi-national companies are dumping Titanium dioxide in India and they sell the same at very low costs;

(b) whether Government are aware that this dumping along with the reduction in import duty from 85% in 1991 to 40% now are leading to the ruin of the two Kerala State owned public sector industries, Titanium products and KMML; and

(c) the necessary steps Government propose to take to save these industrial units?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government has not received any petition requesting for levy of anti-dumping duty on Titanium dioxide, nor has the domestic industry indicated any injury on account of the alleged dumped imports.

(c) Question does not arise.

Import of Items under OGL

2153. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether hundreds of import items were recently put on OGL;

(b) their complete list;

(c) the rationals for this policy;

(d) how much of a drain on our foreign exchange this OGL Policy is likely to be; and

(e) what will be impact of these liberalised imports on production and employment within the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) 340 items have been shifted from the Restricted list to the Free list of imports with effect from 13.04.98. List of these 340 items is attached. [*See* Appendix 184, Annexure No 66]

(c) Quantitative restrictions have to be gradually phased out by the year 2003 as per the Agreements entered into with the trading partners.

(d) The volume of import in respect of items put in the free list is not expected to be significant as judged by last year's import trends. However, the actual outgo of foreign exchange would be known only after watching the trend of actual imports for a period of atleast one year.

(e) The impact of these liberalised imports on the production and employment within the country is unlikely to be significant. Such imports would be subject to payment of customs duties.

Exports from North-East

2154. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the particulars of agricultural mineral, forestry, industrial and other produce being exported form North Eastern region;

(b) the State-wise, list of items exported from and outside (through strock transfer) the region and, item-wise, export earning during last five years; and

(c) the specific steps being initiated for promotion of export activities in the region?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the study conducted by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) on the export potential of North-Eastern Region the following items were identified—Oranges, Pine-apple, Grapes, Passion fruits, Litchi, Guvava, Bananas, Bird eye chillie, Asparagas, Spices both in whole and ground form (ginger, tej patta), Floricultural products including orchids, medicinal plants and herbs, essential oils (lemon grapes oil, citronelia oil), Organically grown food items including tea, silk fabrics, silk garments, handloom furnishings and made-ups, cane and bamboo products, coal, limestone & petroleum based products.

(b) The Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) under the Ministry of Commerce does not get and maintain exports data on a State or a region basis.

(c) As a part of an on-going effort, the Ministry of Commerce takes appropriate steps to give thrust for promotion of exports from the country as a whole and also specifically from the North Eastern Region. Some of the recent steps taken for promotion of exports from North East are as under:—

1. As per the EXIM Policy Export Houses Star Trading Houses etc. are eligible for Special Import Licences at 1% of the total turnover if they source at least 10% of total export turnover from NER.

2. Indian institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) has just submitted the study of the export potential of North Eastern Region (NER) including border trade. The recommendations of the study are being examined in consultation with the concerned agencies.

3. Under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme (CIBS) which envisages balancing capital investment for relieving bottlenecks in export infrastructure, two projects of Meghalaya Govt. have been approved where GOI's participation is Rs. 3.08 crores. Another project for construction of a composite building at Zokawthar, Mizoram has also been sanctioned and Rs. 2.00 crores have been released for the purpose.

4. Airports Authority of India has planned a cargo terminal with all associated facilities as a part of the Master Plan for development of Guwahati Airport.

5. Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is setting up a walk-in-type cold storage for perishables at Guwahati Airport. Another walk-in-type cold storage is to be set up at Agartala Airport.

6. RITES have been asked to conduct a transport optimisation study with a view to examine international linkages and transit/transhipment arrangements between India and neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan.

7. An Inter-Ministerial Task Force under the Ministry of Commerce has been set up to review the entire